Sun., June 21

Dear John:

I received your two letters last night. I am shocked beyond belief. Underhill's tale sounded wild and preposterous and I didn't give it any real credence. But now it seems like things are fitting together. I wonder if the card you got announcing his death could be a macabre joke.

This is the story. The day following the assassination, Underhill showed up at our house in New York. I was sleeping at the time, but he spoke to Charlie who was busy packing for our trip abroad. It was in the morning, and Charlie says that he was highly agitated, but was definitely not drunk and had not been drinking.

As you know, Underhill had good credentials. His great great grandfather had been a general in the revolutionary war, and his family had afterwards been active in military-political affairs. Underhill had been military affairs editor of Life Magazine and a top-line columnist on military affairs for several newspapers, including, I believe, the Washington Post. He was well known in the Pentagon, being on a first name basis with the very top brass. I can attest to this because he was quite helpful when I conducted a press conference in Washington for Winchester during a meeting of the National Rifle Association. He was a Harvard man. I don't know whether he was ever in the official employ of the C.I.A., but he did refer to assignments he did for them, and unquestionable knew many of those people intimately.

He told Charlie that the Kennedy murder wasn't as cut and dried as it might appear. A small clique in the C.I.A. were responsible, he said. According to Underhill, they were conducting a lucrative business in the Far East in narcotics, gun-running, and other contraband, manipulating political intrigue to serve their ends (I wonder if this is what Sen. Morse was referring to in the Richard Rovere piece?) He spelled all of this out in great detail to Charlie. As his story went, Kennedy had got wind of something going on so he was killed before he could blow the whistle. Underhill knew that he knew the people involved (and that they knew he knew) and he fled Washington for his life. When visiting N.Y., he normally stayed at the Harvard Club, but since he was known there, he wanted us to put him up. He talked about leaving the country. Charlie thought he had gone completely mad, but said he could stay. He left and said he would return in a couple hours when I would be up. We never saw him again.

Naturally, we mentioned his story to numerous friends, such as you and Neuweiller--but even at a time when everyone was speculating about who did it, no one could take Underhill's tale seriously. Now I think the main reason was that we can't believe that the C.I.A. could contain a corrupt element every bit as ruthless (and much more efficient) as the Mafia.

(written by Robert Fitzsimmons)